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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

U. S. Department of Agriculture

Monday, Sept. 7, 1942
(Labor Day)

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In 3H/6

Subject: "FARM FAMILY TEAMWORK". Information from the Bureau of Agricultural Economics and the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, U. S. Department of Agriculture, and Misc. Pub. 492, "War and Farm Work."

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This year Labor Day,—September 7, 1942,— has been dedicated to an inspiring war theme. FREE LABOR WILL WIN.

This Labor Day theme contrasts the free, voluntary labor in America with slave labor in the Axis nations. It also embraces all who are doing a full day's work to aid America and its Allies to win the war — and that means many men and women not immediately engaged in producing tanks and guns and planes and other implements of war.

You can see the expression of this spirit in the well-organized teamwork of thousands of farm families living in every one of the 48 states. Because a large number of the young, strong, able-bodied men on farms have already been called into one of the armed services or are working in defense plants, shipyards, or other production needed to win the war, the families of these young men are carrying on. The Food-for-Freedom program goes on because the women and girls and old people in farm homes are behind it. They, too deserve a tribute on this particular Labor Day, because they are giving their effort freely, gladly, in the hope of defeating the foes of freedom.

Farm women and girls are taking over the regular farm work and outside farm chores which those enlisted men and other war workers used to do. They are adding this work to the jobs they have always done — gardening, poultry care, cooking, canning, laundry, cleaning, sewing.

Women and girls are riding tractors and other farm machinery in the fields.

They have planted major crops and cultivated them all summer. They have already begun to harvest some crops. They care for livestock, milk cows, take products to market — even manage mules and shear sheep. Children take over the lighter chores. They are often quite capable of handling teams. Many grade school youngsters know what to do with a dump rake, fork, sling, buck rake, bundle wagon, cultivator, lister, disk, and countless other machines of the simpler types. And of course they can help with hoeing, weeding, and picking.

In some places where the older children are urgently needed this fall to help through the harvest the schools are adjusting their program accordingly. In many schools the regular curriculum is being changed to give more vocational training, such as courses in the use and repair of tractors and other farm equipment.

If you would like to know more about organizing your family for wartime farm work, write to the U. S. Department of Agriculture and ask for a publication called, "War and Farm Work", No. 492. It's full of ideas for every member of the family.

Let's look at a few individual records, gathered by the Agricultural Adjustment Administration of the U. S. Department of Agriculture:

Mrs. Harrison of Woodstock County, Ohio, takes care of a herd of cows with the help of her two daughters, aged 17 and 15. Two younger boys with their 5-year old brother and their pony, pump and haul the water for 50 head of hogs. All the family loaded hay this summer. The 8-year-old boy can drive the tractor.

Another Ohio woman, Mrs. Foster, manages the vegetable garden with her daughter. They also transplant the young tobacco plants....and feed the pigs. The two Eckels boys worked with their father helping to roof a grain storage building....Miss Byers has a farm of 107 acres and runs it alone. She drives the tractor and team.....butchers and sells 500 pounds of pork a week.

Two Missouri girls, Julia Ann and Stella Sellmeyer, are 22 and 19 years old. They have two older brothers in the service. These girls really take the place of their brothers on the farm. They do all the chores....feed 52 head of cattle and 100 head of hogs....milk 3 to 5 cows....care for 500 chickens....They load hay, run the mower, and drive the team. At corn planting time they harrow the ground, plant the corn, and at harvest time help their father get it in. These girls also help their mother about the house....by July first they had canned 90 quarts of peas.

Wilma Dehn is another Missouri girl, 18 years old, who has two brothers in the fighting forces. Mr. and Mrs. Dehn and Wilma together harvested 140 acres of small grain -- Wilma and her mother on the tractor, Mr. Dehn shocking.

Mrs. Hanson of Iowa says: "I can disc, drag, sow oats, plow corn, help with haying and do the chores when necessary."

A New Mexico woman, Mrs. Cook, bought 1000 leghorn chicks. When they first came she gave up the comfort of her own bedroom, moved a cot and some blankets out to the brooder house, and slept there, what little she could, while she watched the temperature so none of the chicks would catch cold.

In a similar way, Mrs. Graff of Colorado, had to watch her 1700 young turkeys hour after hour at night.

Mrs. Mary Baldwin, a widow living in Indiana says she isn't afraid of mules, though most of her neighbors are. She has a team of two and says, "I shoe them and trim their feet whenever it's necessary." When called on, Mrs. Baldwin hitches her mules to a riding plow and plows for her neighbors. She also takes care of 150 chickens, 13 head of sheep and 2 brood sows. She does all the work on her farm.

And here's a story from Illinois: Mrs. Fleming reports that when the hired man on their 250 acre farm enlisted, her husband thought he could manage the field work alone if she could do the hired man's chores. So instead of other kinds of

war work, Mrs. Fleming puts in 5 hours or more a day, feeding and milking 5 cows, cleaning the barn, feeding the hogs and taking care of 700 chickens.

"We read of women working in war factories," Mrs. Fleming says. "Well, farms are war factories, too, too. Our product is food, which is mighty strong ammunition both in peace and war."

And that's how a lot of other women living on farms feel about what they are doing. So, Labor Day this year has a broader meaning and wider purpose than ever before. Labor pauses to salute the stupendous job already done and to dedicate its untiring effort to the still greater task ahead.

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